

**High Level Segment of the 6<sup>th</sup> Session of the  
Commission on Sustainable Development**

Adil Najam

Policy Brief Series # 3

**All rights reserved. No part of this paper may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission of the publisher.**

**A publication of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI).**

**The opinions expressed in the papers are solely those of the authors, and publishing them does not in any way constitute an endorsement of the opinion by the SDPI.**

**Sustainable Development Policy Institute is an independent, non-profit research institute on sustainable development.**



PB- 003- 001- 025- 1998- 005

**© 1998 by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute**

**Mailing Address: PO Box 2342, Islamabad, Pakistan.  
Telephone ++ (92-51) 2278134, 2278136, 2277146, 2270674-76  
Fax ++(92-51) 2278135, URL:[www.sdpi.org](http://www.sdpi.org)**

# Table of Contents

Background on the CSD..... 1  
Domestic Policy..... 1  
International Policy..... 2



The Sustainable Development Policy Institute is an independent, non-profit, non-government policy research institute, meant to provide expert advice to the government (at all levels), political organizations, and the mass media. It is a service agency, providing free advice, and administered by an independent Board of Governors.

### **Board of Governors:**

**Mr V. A. Jafarey**

*Chairman of the Board*

**Dr Abdul Aleem Chaudhry**

Director, Punjab Wildlife Research Centre

**Mr Hameed Haroon**

Pakistan Herald Publications Pvt. Limited

**Mr Irtiza Husain**

Director, Pakistan Petroleum Ltd

**Mr Javed Jabbar**

President, MNJ Communications Pvt. Limited

**Ms Aban Marker Kabraji**

Country Representative, IUCN Pakistan

**Dr Shahrukh Rafi Khan**

Executive Director, SDPI

**Dr Amir Muhammad**

President, ASIANICS

**Mr Shamsul Mulk**

Chairman, WAPDA

**Ms Khawar Mumtaz**

Coordinator, Shirkat Gah

**Mr Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada**

Member, Federal Public Service Commission

In the Policy Briefs series, the SDPI publishes solicited briefs on practical policy issues in the sphere of development. The briefs are written by SDPI's regular or affiliated staff and are meant to provide clear-cut policy outlines which would promote just and sustainable development.



# High Level Segment of the 6<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

Adil Najam

## Background on the CSD

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was set up following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED; held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992). The CSD meets annually in New York. The Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD) in the United Nations Headquarters in New York serves as the secretariat for the CSD. The CSD was established to serve two key functions:

- To monitor the implementation of Agenda 21 (the Plan of Action adopted at UNCED).
- To provide a policy forum for discussion of emerging issues relating to sustainable development.

Agenda 21—which was one of the principal outcomes of UNCED—is a 40 chapter document outlining actions that countries should take to incorporate environment and natural resources issues in their development planning. Substantive areas covered by Agenda 21 include climate change, depletion of the ozone layer, air and water pollution, desertification, deforestation, soil loss, toxic wastes, depletion of stocks of fish, etc. It also considers underlying patterns of development which cause stress to the environment, such as poverty, the external debt of developing countries, unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, the structure of the international economy, demographic pressures, etc.

## *Rio + 5*

1997 marked the fifth anniversary of UNCED as well as of the CSD. The fifth session of the CSD was part of a series of events and meetings (including a special session of the United Nations General Assembly) which were popularly referred to as "Rio + 5". This elaborate review of the implementation of the "UNCED Agenda" at the five-year mark was a sobering rather than a celebratory experience. Although a number of individual countries reported significant achievements at the domestic level, the general consensus was that the promise of a global compact on sustainable development that had been proclaimed at Rio has remained unfulfilled. In particular, the developing countries (South) were critical of the industrialized countries (North) for not having provided the type of financial and technological support that had been envisaged at UNCED. The discussions during the 1998 session of the CSD are likely to be heavily influenced by the debates of 1997.

## Domestic Policy

As during previous meetings of the CSD, Pakistan's main emphasis should be to highlight the progress on the implementation of the Pakistan National Conservation Strategy (PNCS). A formal presentation of the PNCS was made to the second meeting of the CSD in 1994. Each subsequent meeting has been informed of the progress on its implementation.

In essence, the PNCS is Pakistan's Agenda 21. Many of the innovative ideas for sustainable development being called for by Agenda 21 are already incorporated in the PNCS which was actually developed before UNCED. The PNCS is a comprehensive multi-sectoral strategy, which is designed to foster sustainable development by identifying and analyzing environmental and natural resource issues and trends, and subsequently incorporating these into Pakistan's policy-

making and development programs. Its unique multi-dimensional development process involved all major actors in civil society including government, NGOs, academia, mass media and the private sector.

In particular, there is a need to reiterate that the new atmosphere of cooperation created in the country as a result of the PNCS process has encouraged nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to take the lead on environmental awareness and community involvement; business groups have begun to devise strategies for environmental conservation; schools and colleges have started incorporating environmental materials into their curricula; research institutions are undertaking policy research on environmental issues. These are highly robust, non-reversible processes which do not depend solely on one institution or one organization. These civil society processes—which were originally facilitated and encouraged by the PNCS momentum—are now themselves the best guardians of continued PNCS implementation.

The PNCS has also spurred the development of sub-national conservation strategies. The Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy (SPCS) has already been approved and is now in the early stages of its development. Regional strategies for Balochistan and the Northern Areas are in various stages of development.

The revitalization of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Council (PEPC) as the apex environmental policy-making body in the country, the passage of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act in 1997 after a highly consultative and transparent process, the finalization of National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQSs) with the active participation of industry representatives, and the decision to establish environmental courts are amongst the other major advances that need to be highlighted. It should be noted that all of these follow directly from the Pakistan National Conservation Strategy and serve to fulfill the goals of Agenda 21 implementation in Pakistan.

### ***Sectoral Issues***

In the run-up to the 6th session of the CSD, meetings of two sectoral working groups were held—on Freshwater Management and on Industry and Sustainable Development. Discussions in these areas will be continued at the CSD. Both of these areas are of great importance to Pakistan and are covered in detail in the PNCS.

In relation to the second of these, a particular mention may be made of the recent finalization of the NEQS. This was done through a process of consultation and dialogue with industry representatives through a government-business roundtable. These will be operationalized through the Pakistan Environment Protection Act, 1997 (PEPA-97). Important features of this law includes: self-reporting by industry; heavy fines (up to Rupees 100,000 per day) for non-compliance; the channeling back of fines to industry in the shape of soft loans to improve environmental compliance by industry; the setting up of Environmental Tribunals; creation of provincial sustainable development funds; and the right of citizens to monitor non-compliance.

### **International Policy**

Pakistan is fully committed to the CSD process. We should stress that we share with other nations our profound concern over the deterioration of the natural environment. We believe that sustainable development requires concerted action at both global and national levels. Global action is needed to implement the various international conventions and treaties signed in the last decade, to mobilize public opinion, to establish a framework that engenders cooperation and collaboration between countries, and to ensure that adequate financial and technical assistance is available wherever it is needed in order to fulfill these laudable goals.

As far as global issues are concerned, Pakistan has generally supported the position of the Group of 77 (G77). The G77 has strongly articulated the environmental and developmental interests of Southern countries. In particular, it has staunchly maintained that the historical responsibility for many global environmental problems lies with the industrialized countries of the North; that developing countries should not be asked to forego their legitimate developmental aspirations; that a just international economic order and poverty alleviation are key ingredients of sustainable development; that institutions for international environmental governance should be based on the principles of transparency and democracy; and that new international environmental responsibilities should not be imposed upon developing countries without the concomitant provision of additional resources.

Pakistan does not have an independent position from the G77 on any substantial issue and should support the positions taken by the G77. Moreover, Pakistan has been a leader of the G77—for example, during 1992 Pakistan was the Chairperson of the G77 and played a decisive role in shaping the decisions taken at UNCED in that capacity. Every opportunity should be taken to maintain this leadership role within the Group and support its consensus positions in plenary discussions.

Beyond the above, it should be noted that Pakistan has already ratified both the UN Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). Particular mention may be made of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). A Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for Pakistan, prepared through a thorough consultative process, is now in final draft form in preparation for the next conference of the parties (COP) of the Convention. This may be used as an example of Pakistan's commitment to fulfilling its responsibilities under multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

However, it should also be highlighted that there is an obligation on the part of the rich countries of the North—which have been largely responsible for creating a number of global environmental problems (e.g. global climate change)—to transfer the required resources and technologies to the developing countries of the South. Given the pressing developmental priorities of the South (including widespread poverty and backbreaking external debts), the developing world cannot be expected to carry the ever-increasing burdens of the global environmental agenda without such assistance. It was abundantly clear at CSD-5 that the North to South flow of environmental assistance, particularly in relation to MEAs, has been well below the adequate or anticipated level. Unless this trend is reversed soon, the assessment of "Rio + 10" will be even harsher than that of "Rio + 5".